

Headline: Godrej Family Rp 272 trillion Wealth, from Key Production, Satellites, to Mouse Glue

Description: Godrej Family from India is an example of a successful family company.

Date: 28 July 2024

Publication: Cnnindonesia.com

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Link: <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/ekonomi/20240728080237-92-1126312/keluarga-godrej-berharta-rp272-t-dari-kunci-satelit-hingga-lem-tikus>

Godrej Family, a 127-year-old conglomerate family behind HIT mosquito repellent, Stella air freshener, and Mitu tissue. (Photo: Basith Subastian/CNNIndonesia)

Not all family businesses can last long, where unprofessional family-based business management often triggers business collapse. However, Godrej Family from India is an example of a successful family company. A family that manages the Godrej Group, a 127-year-old multinational conglomerate.

Godrej Group's subsidiaries and affiliates include Godrej Industries, Godrej Consumer Products, Godrej Agrovet, Godrej Properties, and Godrej & Boyce. Are you familiar with HIT mosquito repellent, Stella air freshener, Mitu baby tissue, Biosol fragrant carboic acid, and Cap Gajah mouse trap glue?

Those are some examples of Godrej products in Indonesia. Godrej business ventures have reached 85 countries with an estimated 1.2 billion customers. In 2023, Godrej Group's revenue hit US\$1.6 billion or Rp26 trillion (using Rp16,300 exchange rate).

Thanks to the family business, the Godrej Family today is among the richest families in India, even at the global level. In 2023, Forbes ranks the Godrej Family at number 12 on the list of the richest people in India. Forbes estimates the Godrej Family's wealth at US\$16,7 billion or equivalent to Rp272 trillion.

Godrej was founded by Ardeshir Godrej in 1879 or even before India's independence. His business at that time was making keys, where Ardeshir was the first of six children of Burjorji and Dosibai Gootharajee.

The Gootharajee family is a prominent Parsi-Zoroastrian family from Mumbai, India. Ardeshir's father and grandfather were real estate brokers before Ardeshir's father changed the family name from Gootharajee to Godrej in January 1871.

Ardeshir was a law graduate who had worked at a well-known law firm in Zanzibar, Tanzania. Later, he realized that law was not his calling, to which he returned to India and worked as a pharmacist's assistant at a drug store, where he became interested in producing surgical equipment.

Ardeshir borrowed 3,000 Indian rupees or around Rp500 thousand at that time from his father's friend, rather than asking his wealthy parents, to finance his enterprise. Ardeshir reasoned he asked for help from other people because he was sure that his father would give the capital for free instead of lending it. Ardeshir also refused to take the family business inheritance after his father died

Unfortunately, Ardeshir's surgical equipment business failed because, despite their excellent quality, he attached 'Made in India' label on his products. Ardeshir's company that exported the products to England faced objections to the label from the country. The business went bankrupt because Ardeshir was adamant about 'favoring his country' over the wishes of England.

Later, he tried various businesses that all ended in failure. One day, he read news about the rampant theft in his city, which inspired him to make a high-quality 'anti-theft' lock. The 29-year-old young man approached his father's friend again to borrow some more money. Ardeshir then built a lock production business in Anchor, at the heart of Mumbai on May 7, 1987. After making locks, he also produced bulletproof safes in 1901.

His younger brother, Pirojsha Burjorji Godrej, later joined him in mid-1908. The following year, they secured a British patent for the world's first springless lock, an invention that brought them a lot of wealth.

Starting as a lock maker, Godrej then introduced Chavi, the world's first animal fat-free soap. Their soap business exploded and received support from many India's national figures. Godrej's presence is indeed part of the Swadeshi India movement, the original 'Made in India' movement.

After his business prospered, Godrej expanded into the furniture business and released a steel cupboard product in 1923. Then, on India's Independence Day in 1952, Godrej introduced a second soap brand, Cinthol, which later turned Godrej into India's second largest soap manufacturer.

In 1958, Ardeshir and his brother explored the electronics business by releasing a refrigerator brand. Then around the 1990s, the two brothers followed in their father's footsteps in the real estate business, where they founded Godrej Properties. A year later, Godrej's business field expanded again, this time targeting the agribusiness sector through Godrej Agrovet.

In 2005, Godrej entered the luxury culinary market through Godrej Nature's Basket. Today, Godrej's has more than 30 premium outlets and it has become a global luxury dish hunting destination. When it seems that it has explored many types of business on earth, Godrej then turned to the space business. In 2008, India became the fifth country to launch an unmanned satellite to the moon named Chandrayaan-1.

Godrej Aerospace supplies critical components for the mission by donating the Vikas propulsion engine, as well as remote sensing and ground system antennas. In 2010, Godrej entered the Indonesian market by acquiring PT Megasari Makmur. Godrej's business in Indonesia includes home and personal care needs.

Last May, the Godrej family decided to split the company into two managements. The family says the 'split partnership' is a form of ownership restructuring. In this initiative, Adi Godrej and his brother Nadir Godrej retained the ownership of Godrej Industries which oversees five companies.

Adi and Nadir raised the flag of Godrej Industries Group (GIG), which consists of Godrej Industries, Godrej Consumer Products, Godrej Properties, Godrej Agrovet, and Astec Lifesciences. Furthermore, their cousins, Jamshyd Godrej and Smita Crishna, will take over the unlisted Godrej & Boyce and its affiliates under the Godrej Enterprises Group (GEG).

GEG operates across industries including aerospace, aviation, defense, furniture, IT software, and real estate. The split also involves succession planning within each entity. Pirojsha Godrej,

son of Adi Godrej, is slated to take on a leadership role in GIG, succeeding Nadir Godrej as chairman in August 2026. (pta/pta)